



the suffering world

africa

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Lay-out, Art

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THE SUFFERING WORLD

... NO SPOT in the wide world has escaped suffering. The history of mankind, like an immense wheel of misfortune, has ever revolved in pain and blood-shed. There have been periods of greater distress than others and some countries have had a bigger share of suffering than others.

Even our modern civilization with all its attempts at world-wide understanding and collaboration, scientific improvement and medical advancement has not eliminated the scourges of war, hunger, illness—which affect men of every position in life, race or creed.

humanity that accepts

ALL RELIGIONS have given suffering an analogous explanation. All, for various reasons, tend to the same goal — acceptance of suffering.

I am thinking especially of Buddhism, which, hardly having grouped together half a billion faithful, projected its rays on the whole of Asia. In Buddha's more or less symbolic life, we are told that he was brought up by his father in complete ignorance of pain and suffering. It was in the safety and shelter of paradisaical dwellings that the young prince spent his youth when one day he decided to wander beyond the enclosure of the palace.

For the first time in his life he met an old man. "Who is this man with hair the color of silver, whose face is wrinkled like a shrivelled fruit and whose body is thus bent towards the earth?"

"This, Prince, is an old man," replied the servant. "All, like him must submit to decrepitude."

"Let us return quickly," exclaimed the young man. "What is pleasure since this is to what life leads everyone of us!"

A second time he met a man covered with ulcers, groaning with pain and hideous to behold. Overcome at the sight, he understood that bodily well-being is like a dream.

A third time he saw a corpse being carried on a stretcher. He remained a good while in contemplation then said:

"Accursed be youth mined by old age!

"Accursed be health ruined by disease!

"Accursed be life dissolved in death!

"All is suffering: Birth is pain! Old age is pain! Disease is pain! Death is pain!

"Seeing what we do not like is pain!

"Not obtaining what we desire is pain!

"This is the reason for pain: the thirst for pleasure; the thirst for life; the thirst for prosperity.

"And here is the way to make pain cease: not to thirst any more: destroy desire, suppress the passions.

"Have a belief that is pure, A will that is pure,

"Words that are pure, A conduct that is pure,

"A way of life that is pure, An attitude that is pure,

"An imagination that is pure, Thoughts that are pure,

"By these eight ways, eight times holy, you will put an end to suffering!

"If then the bad cause you injury, rejoice and say, 'They are good because they could have struck me.'

"If they dare to strike you, thank them and say, 'They are good, very good for they could have wounded me.'

"If they wound you, be happy and say, 'They are good, very good indeed, for they have spared me from death.'

"If they come to kill you, rejoice and say to yourself, 'They are still good for they are but helping me towards the fulfillment of my desires: the end of this perishable life.' "

Millions of Asians, for the last twenty-five centuries, have listened to this language of a man who, as Marco Polo said, would have been a great saint had he been a Christian.

Thanks to his doctrine, a social equilibrium and a spirit of peace and reciprocal kindness have taken root and been established in half the world and given rise to a real efflorescence of works of mercy as is witnessed in the story of Koan-yn, a Buddhist goddess and daughter of a legendary king.

At the approach of her marriage, her father made known to her his wishes. Her reply was:

"It is hard not to submit to the orders of the king, my father; but I have decided not to marry,

for I want to try to achieve perfection and become a Buddha (that is to say, "perfect and save mankind").

The enraged father was horrified at the absurdity of such a decision taken by a king's daughter.

"Who does not look forward to the joys of marriage?" explained Koan-yn. "And yet my heart is as cold as a burned-out cinder and I feel the desire to purify it more and more."

Mad with rage, the king resorted to threats. To prevent an outburst, Koan-yn suggested an alternative:

"If I *must* marry, I consent, on condition that my husband be a physician."

"A physician! What an idea!"

"Yes, I want to cure humanity of all the ills that gnaw at its being, that is, of cold, heat, the concupiscences, of old age and infirmity. I want to bring all on a level with each other, to establish a communal sharing of goods, without distinction between mine and yours. If you comply with my desires, I can still be a Buddha and save mankind. I am then willing to marry."

The father in his fury, imprisoned Koan-yn in the queen's garden but this only made her remark smilingly:

"Nothing, henceforth, do I desire." And before the rising smoke of incense, she prostrated herself to adore heaven and earth. Koan-yn was then only nineteen. It is thus that having learned from Buddha that "he shed more tears than the waters of the ocean," Koan-yn became "the most merciful and most compassionate," as is written in all the temples consecrated to her.

These and innumerable other stories have, for centuries opened to the Beatitudes of Christ, hearts and souls that are prepared and attentive to His teachings.

From MISSI

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ETERNAL SUFFERING OF THE HUMAN SOUL

THE AFRICAN experiences it more intensely, perhaps, than many others, for, by the very fact of his psychological makeup, he lives mostly on feelings and emotions. Moreover, the circumstances of his life and the local customs amplify these feelings . . . as a result, who can guess the mental suffering to which the African is exposed?

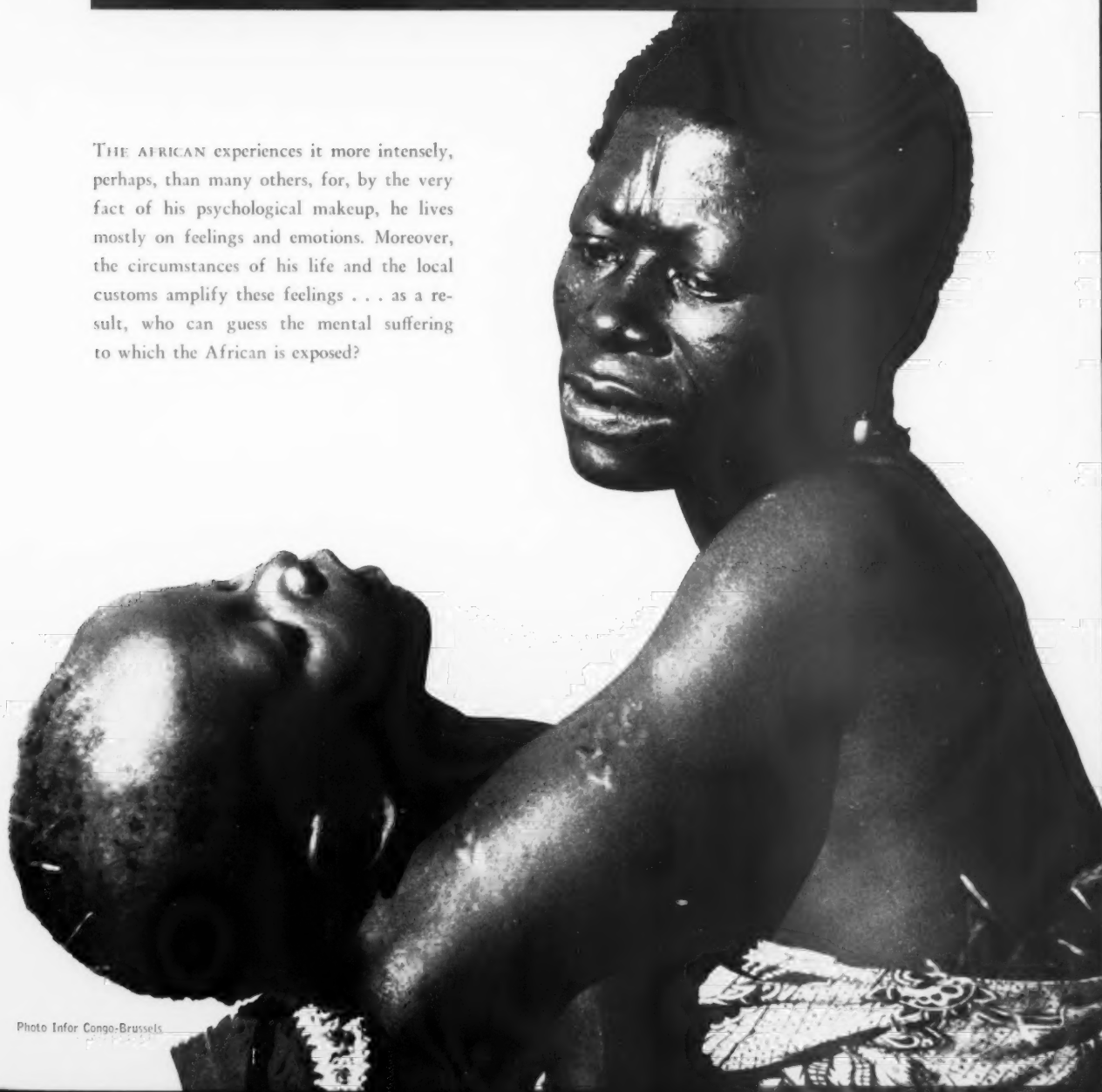


Photo Infor Congo-Brussels

SUFFERING -- the

LOT of the

KABYLIAN

WOMAN



WHO HAS NOT MET on the mountainpaths of Kabylia those picturesque groups of Kabyle women?

I can still recall my first walk among the mountains in the early spring. The snow had thawed and nature smiled with a tender green life budding forth after the long winter sleep. The fig trees, from their sunlit branches, sent forth new green shoots that became of a lighter shade as we scaled the heights of Fort-National. In the plain, the trees were already draped in their green foliage whereas on the summits the buds had hardly yet opened.

At the bend of the road, a group of women appeared, dressed in vivid, gay colors, a veritable pageant: gold vermillion, mauve, green and yellow . . . They were going down the steep road of their village and, in the early spring morning, looked like a fusion of colors flowing from the smelter's pot. Mirth and laughter told of some happy event such as a wedding or a feast.

I HAD BEEN to Kabylia before . . . not on a feast day, but on the ordinary day with the hum-drum of daily life and its routine tasks unfolding before my eyes; young mothers carrying their youngest on their slender backs, their faces wearing an anxious look—no young maidens for they were all married—women, some still young and alert, most of them worn with



age and toil . . . climbing up the steep paths leading from the river to the village; accomplishing the daily drudgery of carrying water, bent under the weight of the "taglilt," their earthen pitcher, or more prosaically an oil can, full of water, gracefully balanced on their heads.

These women, so picturesque at a distance, trudge painfully up the mountain path with the daily supply of water . . . one of life's essentials, and as one approaches them, an undefinable emotion is felt. These women pass by with a look that is lifeless, a look that is painfully resigned, a look that is remote, turned away.

And yet, it is not this daily toil of carrying water which weighs on them. Besides, at the fountain, away from the men and at liberty, the women chat and joke like children—their only time for relaxation in a life without a horizon. Physical effort is not always the cause of suffering. Many an American woman has to work far harder than the Kabyle. The latter have a few "pancakes" to cook or a burnoose to weave, but housekeeping is not a heavy job in Kabyle: no windows, no furniture, only a floor to sweep and the wooden trunks more or less gaily decorated to move about, a few jars and the "akoufis" (or jugs for holding grain and figs) encased in the mud wall, to dust.

The Kabyle house is quite plain, in fact too plain; it does not feel like a home, even the very modest, which a woman can love and take pride in. Nothing but the rather naive carvings and patterns on the huge earthen jars and their stands, speak of a woman's existence in the house and whose personality though latent, is revealed in this humble self expression.

A woman does not begrudge the physical effort exerted in the care of the home—she finds joy in it. But even when modern conveniences like running water lightens her tasks, the expression on the Kabyle woman is not less gloomy or less apprehensive. The load that weighs her down is heavier than the "taglilt" on the most rugged of paths: it is the bitter feeling of her social nothingness.

. . . ON STUDYING the woman's position in her family by right and in actual fact, the authority she exercises over her children and her rights to inheritance, we are astounded at the very inferior position she holds and how entirely deprived she is of every right or consideration.

There evidently are a few families where the situation is different. We have heard these speak of their happy family life, but these are yet the select few



French Embassy

and far too exceptional; a mere handful in whose wake, we hope, the others will follow.

As for the majority of the population, they resemble the patriarchal families in which the head is vested with full power. At his daughter's marriage, the father exercises this right by giving his future son-in-law a dowry and the girl is handed over to the husband under whose power she henceforth remains. If the father does not exist, this right belongs to the nearest male relative. Never in her life is the woman free.

After marriage, the husband alone enjoys every advantage and power; only he can break the marriage vow by repudiation.

The repudiated woman has no rights whatever on her children and no more ties bind her to them. Nor has she any right to inherit from her husband, for this belongs to the men related on the father's side.

Such is in outline, the juridical system which binds the Kabylian woman. Hence, it is not astonishing that a most decisive step in life, marriage, is, for the Kabylian woman, vitiated from the very start.

Married without consent, she can be repudiated without any fault on her part, and she leaves, alone, without any rights, without any complaints, tossed between the power, and, very often the cupidity of the father and the fickle fancies of her husband.

→ And yet, shocking though it may appear to us, marriage without consent is not the worst part. What is far more heart-rending is that the young girl at her marriage, does not look forward to the joys of a family life, to a home that she can call "hers", to a life of security, a place of refuge, a home wherein she will find joy, contentment and a link with the future.

Although custom has given the Kabylian woman an inferior role as regards her children, it cannot take away from her the prerogatives which are the natural issue of her motherhood. It is the mother who brings up and looks after the children; she who moulds their characters by her close contact and constant influence which leave a lasting impression of vital importance. It is during the first few years of the child's life, which are often decisive, that the mother



imprints on her children the character which will mark them for life.

In a country like Kabylia, where the woman is kept away from society the world and its progress, one can conjecture how disastrous must be her influence on the future generation.

How often do we not hear the men complain bitterly that their children are badly brought up, that their wives are ignorant as to the necessary care or guidance. Hence they are forced to send their children away from home, away from the mother's influence, that an education in keeping with today's civilization may be given them.

Unconsciously, the woman takes her revenge. Man and society make of her an inferior, but in the long run, it is they who suffer from it; and this inferiority which they create and maintain becomes a blind force which rises as an obstacle to the progress and advancement of the race.

Extracts from "La Femme Kabyle"
by Laura B. Lefevre





HUNGER

"The profound conversion of individuals and even the practice of virtue depend so much on the transformation of their living conditions, that it would be futile to endeavor to lead souls to heaven as if earth did not exist. Our Lord was the first to have compassion on the crowd: He began by giving bread."

Dr. Aujoulat, Founder of the Lay Missionary Movement, "Ad Lucem".



At the present time, two-thirds of mankind live in destitution. The technical revolution that has taken place in many countries has established a sharp cleavage between those who live in poverty and those who know a high standard of living.

Poverty is first of all a question of under-nourishment; it is often a condition of vast groups of men in Africa.

At certain times . . . but only at certain times . . . plague ravages nations and people die by the thousands.

Somewhere in the world . . . but only in some parts . . . there can always be found men at war with one another.

But for centuries, and in by far the greater part of the earth, men are tormented by hunger and die of it. Recent statistics given by U.N.E.S.C.O. tell us that apart from Western Europe and North America, the peoples of the world are underfed.

To read poignant statistics is one thing; to live among people who are starving is another.

ALGERIANS ARE HUNGRY



THE EXTRACTS WHICH FOLLOW are taken from "La Grande Maison", a novel by the Algerian writer Mohammed Dib.

Born at Tleceen in 1920, he studied in his native town and then at Oujda. Among the trades that he had to practice were those of carpet weaver, accountant, teacher, and above all, journalist.

"La Grande Maison" is more a narrative than a novel, for there is hardly any plot in the story. It tells of a huge building swarming with people . . . as is often found in the poorer quarters of Algerian

towns and into which a whole world of people is crammed, tormented daily by misery, cold and hunger . . . an animal hunger, never satisfied, accentuating the humiliating feeling of other privations that are not material.

This life, where suffering, hatred, revolt and panic mingle with generosity and kindness, is seen and felt by Omar, the school boy, an observer who is neither cold nor impersonal.

It is he, one of the occupants of the "Big House", who is the connecting link that joins together all the daily dramas that are related in this narrative.

THURSDAY . . . Omar had no school. Aina, his mother, did not know how to get rid of him. She placed the stove (bowl-shaped earthen receptacle) in the middle of the room. It was stuffed with coal dust that burned with difficulty.

They had thought, "the cold is finished", when, unexpectedly winter came back, cutting the air with its icy blasts.

At Tlemcen, if the temperature falls in February, it is sure to snow.

Omar glued his feet to the icy-cold tiles, his legs bare up to the knees, clothed in a short tunic tucked into his trousers, his shoulders wrapped tightly in a tattered shawl. Aina, overcome by feverish irritation began scolding: "Omar, will you keep still?"

The child hugged the stove. He poked the bottom of it. A few embers struggled for life among the ashes. He toasted his hands which became gradually whiter, and warmed his feet with them.

The vivid red tiles were painful to the eyes.

Omar crouched in front of the stove . . .

The fire was dying out in the damp and gloomy room.

Omar could only warm his hands, his feet hurt him terribly. A cold that he could not shake off, gripped him.

He rested his chin on his knees. Squatting like that he warmed up a little. Eventually he dozed off all huddled up, with the thought that there was nothing to eat haunting him. There were only a few hard crusts left that an aunt had brought them.

The grey morning wore on, minute by minute.

Suddenly a shiver ran down his spine. He awoke, his legs numb and full of pins and needles. The cold nipped him unbearably.

The stove had disappeared. Aina had taken it away.

At the other end of the room, sitting cross-legged, the stove placed against one thigh, she was muttering to herself.

She saw him open his eyes.

"This is all your good-for-nothing father has left us," she expostulated, "nothing but misery. He has gone and hidden his face in the earth, and all the misfortune has fallen on me. He is well off where he is . . . in the grave. He never thought of putting aside a penny. And you are all stuck to me like leeches. (She has three children.) I have been stupid. I should have turned you out on the street, and escaped to some lonely mountain."

LORD, who can stop her now? Her black tormented eyes glistened.

"My unhappy fate," she murmured.

Omar kept quiet.

It was clear she had a grudge against somebody . . . but who?

The child, before this growing anger, remained puzzled.

A few days later, Aina emptied out the boiling contents of her pot . . . soup made with chopped vermicelli and vegetables . . . into a large enamel dish.

Nothing else . . . no bread . . . there wasn't any.

"Is that all?" exclaimed Omar. "A 'Tarechta' without bread?"

Omar stood astride in the doorway facing his mother, Aouicha and Meriem, with the dish of soup that smelt strongly of red spice, on the table before him.

"Is that all?" he repeated angrily this time.

"There's no more bread," replied Aina, "the bread that Lalla brought us is all gone."

"Then how are we going to eat the soup, Ma?"



"With spoons."

The spoons plunged into the dish and Omar immediately squatted beside the others.

"Gentle, child", Aina said.

Aouicha started, "Ow!"

She choked, her tongue on fire from the generous helping of soup; but that did not stop her from treating herself to huge mouthfuls.

The children ate in silence with a regularity that was half mechanical, the soup scalding their mouths; a sensation of warmth descended inside them . . . the soup was good in winter.

Soon the little soup was finished: the spoons scratched the bottom of the dish. The children

snatched the dish from one another, scraping it furiously. They gathered up the last few drops of soup. Then they were forced to have recourse to water to fill up the empty space they still felt inside them. Bent over the large pail that stood beside Aina, they were at last satisfied.

One day passed, then another, and yet another.

Misery made the people of Dar Sbitar wretched. In Aina's home everything was as it had always been. Only, there was a little more misery; the children were a little less sturdy. The faces became thinner and greyer. Their eyes had a feverish glitter. And yet . . . extraordinary though it seemed . . . in the town, Omar met people smiling and healthy.

HE RESENTED IT. "WHY?" he demanded. "Why are there those who eat and those who do not . . .?"

Never did his mother nor the others give an answer. And yet it was necessary to know. Occasionally some decided: "It's our destiny." Or else, "God knows." Omar was never satisfied with such reasons. His hunger would not allow him to be.

He was always terribly hungry, and there was hardly ever anything to eat in the house. He was so hungry that sometimes his saliva thickened into froth in his mouth. Consequently, his unique pre-occupation was to keep in existence. And day after day, as he struggled with life, the little word "why?" echoed and re-echoed in his little head as though it would never fade away.

but
WHY are
we wretches

?



the happy man's prayer

Lord teach us
How to truly love, through love of Thee.
Devoid of vanity let us embrace
Each member of the human race.

Lord teach us
Love of Charity.
Enable us, through love, to see the one unloved:
To make his suffering our own,
Our hearts — his humble, happy home.

Give us the grace to sympathize
With countless ones, though wholly innocent of blame,
Live lives profaned, by famine, torment, poverty,
Who, in this abundant world, deprived of life's necessity,
die of hunger, heat or cold, enduring miseries untold.

Dare we indulge, to our content,
Aware of their predicament,
Unheeding God's unchanged Command.
To love AS SELF our fellowman!

Have pity Lord
Upon the poor, who bear the brand of leprosy
And on our brethren, countless more
So stricken by adversity.

As truth reveals my happy life,
And conscience strikes my saddened soul
In deep repentance let me cry:
"There — but for the grace of God — go I".
Too long have I through shame or fear
Abandoned hope, in lives so drear!
Inspire me to humbly dress, long festering wounds
with Thy caress.

Forgive prolonged neglect!—
In reparation,
Let us re-dedicate our lives, oh Lord,
To their salvation.

adapted by Evangeline Flynn

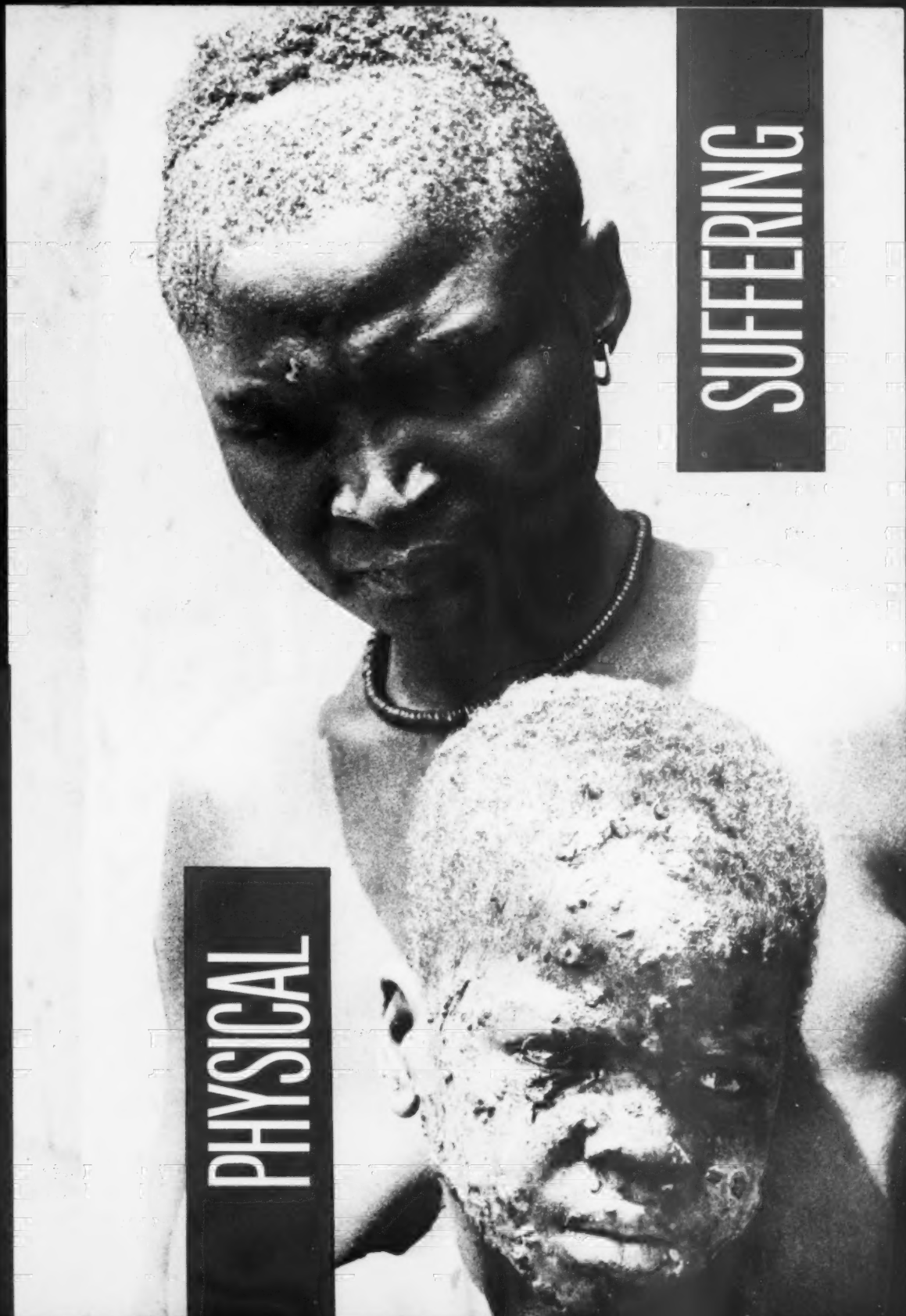


Photo: WHO-Geneva

Photo — WHO-Geneva

PHYSICAL

SUFFERING



THOSE WITHOUT A NAME

We often speak of the African children, of the graceful Kabylian, of the brown Saharan dweller, of the beautiful children of Uganda . . . children of Africa, every one of them marked by its race and its family milieu. But one seldom hears of . . . THOSE WITHOUT A NAME.



THE DAY is drawing to its close. A fine Cadillac stops before the door. A gentleman descends.

"Excuse me, Sister, are there two children here, the eldest of whom is called Gladys? She must be about 8 or 9."

"Yes, we have Gladys and her brother Xavier who is three. Why, would you like to see them?"

The visitor hesitates a second.

"I mean . . . No, just a minute. Would you like to give them these sweets?"

The gentleman before me is the manager of an industrial firm; one who is used to giving orders, to handling business, . . . is wealthy, full of self-assurance. And yet, the hand that offers me the bag of candy trembles slightly. . .

"May I know from whom?"

"Oh, it doesn't really matter . . . It won't mean anything to them anyway. Just give them the sweets will you, please?"

He is already turning to leave.

I have a feeling this man is not in the dark concerning the mystery enshrouding the childhood of Gladys and Xavier and before he has time to reach the door I call out:

"Would you mind waiting just a minute and I'll get the children."

Both are in class; I seize the pair and take them to my office.

"Here they are. Would you like to come in?"

Reluctantly he enters and finds himself face to face with two children. Gladys, dark brown, with glossy hair, a uniform that is too long, eyes that are curiously evasive; and Xavier, hands in his pocket, a dirty nose and wooly hair. A few seconds of painful silence . . . they look at one another, then a most unexpected gesture, violent because stirred from the very depths. The man has encircled Gladys in his arms. He presses her close to him with all his strength, kisses her hair and forehead repeating: "My little girl . . . My little girl . . ."

Xavier, a little startled, stands and looks at this man who has taken his sister. Suddenly, he is lifted and he too is encircled in the embrace. His little head nestles close to the strong shoulder.

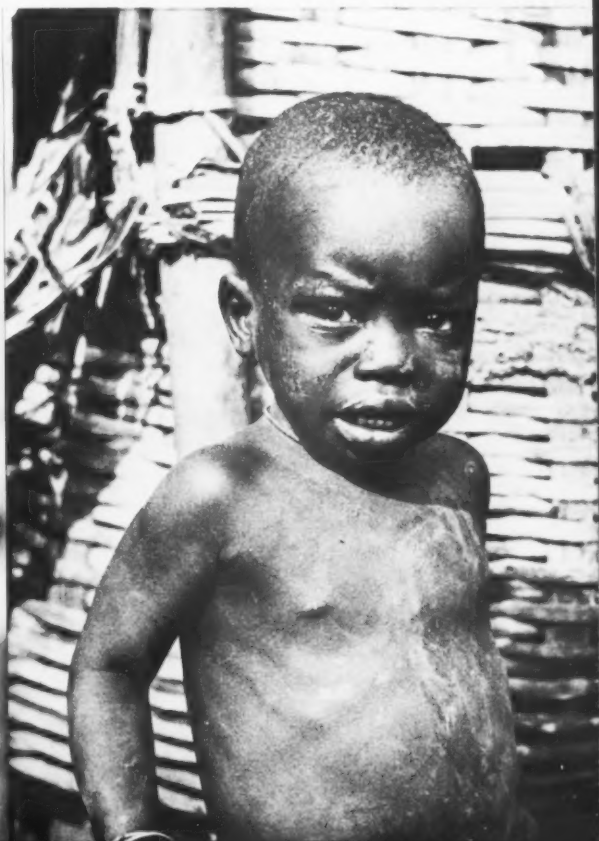
There is no need for explanations . . .

The visitor turns to me quite upset:

"It is three years, Sister, since I last saw the little girl, and I never knew the boy! You understand, Sister."

He gives them the candy, places them on either knee, kisses them, embraces them, then. . .

"I must be off . . . I made a detour to pass by



here. Bye, bye, Gladys, bye, bye Xavier! Be good and work well! . . . Do they speak English Sister?"

"They speak their mother's language, but we do teach them English."

"The girl looks intelligent."

"Yes, but she is very reticent."

HE IS IN A HURRY to leave. However, a last question:

"They're happy here, aren't they, Sister . . . happy with you?"

"No they're not," and I looked him straight in the eyes.

"Why? What's lacking them?"

What a question! Is it lack of a conscience or is it to calm a guilty one? "What's lacking? Why the most essential! They lack the love of a father and mother!"

Embarrassed . . . he is used to awkward situations as a businessman and knows how to get out of a tight corner.

"I'm sure the Sisters spoil them. You take far better care of them than anyone else could."

And he moves towards his car, his compliments becoming more and more profuse.

"What wonderful work you do, Sister . . . really wonderful. I'm sure they lack nothing."

Being at a loss for words he can think of nothing better than paying us compliments.

How am I to tell him in such a curt conversation that Gladys never says a word! that she had to be taken to a psychiatrist . . . that she lies, steals every day and is a puzzle to her teachers? How am I to tell him that ever since Xavier came to us he has sores, coughs, is unsettled and sickly?

To see them he had made a detour, had brought them each a bag of candy, had fondled them for two minutes on his knees . . . had he not done his duty?

In a few hours he will be on the verandah of his cottage, surrounded by family comfort, his little blonds around him . . . He will never know, he does not want to know, there are two children suffering. But it cuts me to the heart and urges me to say a last word before he leaves.

"Having food, clothes and shelter is not all. A child needs the love and security of its home. We give them all we can but we shall never be their father or

mother. Why does their mother never come to see them?"

"She is with another white man . . . she has to earn her living . . . she can't help it . . ."

"May I suggest that you come to see them from time to time?"

He is perplexed.

"I have a family, you know. It is very difficult . . . and perhaps it's just as well they don't know their father for they will never have a home."

He opens the door.

"I shall try to drop in in a few months. Thank you, Sister for all you are doing for them. However, they must not know my name by any means."

And the car moves off.

Gladys' father? Why, he is a man like many another . . . an upright, industrial gentleman, father of a family, a Christian like so many others! Only, he ignores the fact that he is responsible for two children who are not happy.

Behind the window panes, ten, twenty inquisitive heads peer. They have heard a car draw up before the house; they must guess whose father this white man is . . . who can the lucky one be today? And they question each other on the way to the dining room:

"Whose father is that?"

"They say he's come for Gladys."

"Did you see his car?"

"Is he going to take her away?"

That night, in the dormitory, Gladys' eyes sparkle in the dark . . .

"Aren't you sleeping, Gladys?"

"No!"

"Why?"

"Sister, tell me . . . Will he come to take me?"

No, poor little Gladys; he will not come to take you. Neither you nor the others, for after having given you the precious gift of life, this man, like so many others, has, as you yourself say, "thrown" you away.

It is this word, heard from the lips of these very children, the multitude of "those without a name", that makes us realize keenly the conflict that actually rents their little souls, and which eventually breeds bitterness, hatred and revolt.

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, W.S.

*Whether they be black or white,
men and women have everywhere the same desires
the same fears, the same ambitions,
because they have all been created by God
and destined to the same happiness.*

Sr. Marie Andre, W.S.





Africans are craving for understanding more than anything else. We feel that after all, this is one world and we are all members of one race—the human race. If we can in our humble way try to bring better understanding, we know that we will have a better world.

Joseph Lamotey, of Ghana.

THE COLOR BAR

Complete separation of white and black is maintained by rigorously applied laws. Ill-fed, badly-housed Africans provide the labor for industries that are directed by white men who draw all the profit from them.

In SOUTH AFRICA there are

8,500,000 Africans

300,000 Indians

1,000,000 Half-castes

2,500,000 Whites

The Whites, descendants of Dutch settlers, French or English emigrants possess 83% of the land . . . the whole political power. 5% of the Africans can read and write, though considerable effort and money have been spent on schools for them.

Manifold social problems, scandals, injustice, and above all, great suffering, result from this. In his book "Tell Freedom", Peter Abrahams endeavored to bring this before the world's eyes.

. . . There is in South Africa a particular problem that could be a grave hindrance to the growth of the Catholic missionary spirit if it is not dealt with vigorously. I refer to the racial situation. . . the racial problem in South Africa is aflame with issues that involve justice and charity. When a fellow man cries out for justice, when his spiritual and material misery is like a bleeding sore before us, we cannot turn away and disclaim all obligation to him.

(extracts from a letter of the Archbishop of Durban)

TELL

*... We condemn the iron and bamboo curtains
which separate men, but have we not erected
other barriers? Class prejudice, race
prejudice, color prejudice.
from "Exchanges"*

FREEDOM

PETER ABRAHAMS

was born on March 19, 1919 in the "colored" locality of Vrededorp, one of the poorest slums in Johannesburg. Since 1941 he has lived near London. At a very early age, he lost his father and was soon cruelly made conscious of the fact that he was black and a negro, with all its implications in South Africa.

"Tell Freedom" (published by Faber and Faber Ltd., London) his master-piece, does more than give a sketch of this life. In language that is simple but gripping, as stirring as the cause for which he is pleading, he presents us with a document which, though humorous, is deeply moving. More than a public declamation, more than a ruthless witness of abuse to humanity that racial segregation is, this document brings us a message. It was not to flee from his wretched life that he left South Africa but to keep his promise to his fellow-men: to cry out to the world the despair of a people.

Peter Abrahams, little known in our part of the world, reveals himself to us through an outstanding work. Of negro origin—and this alone speaks much—he has the right to reveal to us with all his native sincerity and spontaneity, the appallingly wretched and debasing life which is the lot of the "colored" people in South Africa. "Tell Freedom" is not a novel and is more than an autobiography. Through this scoffed human life, an entire world, a whole human race of men, into which this life is set, is revealed to us. It is a humanity socially reviled by a dominant minority.



... Impelled by something I could not explain, I went, night after night, on long lonely walks into the white areas of Johannesburg. Night after night, I left black Vrededorp and walked along broad, clean, tree-lined streets. I walked slowly and felt the cool breeze and heard the sweet silences of these streets. I threw back my shoulders, raised my head, and filled my lungs with clean air. There was living, breathing space, and I felt better for being in it.

On either side of these broad streets were strong houses, made of bricks. Here, had the streets been noisy, the strong walls would have kept the noise out of the houses; here, had the wind howled, had the rain lashed, these houses would have been dry and quiet and warm.

I looked into the windows of these houses. There was the magic of electricity. A boy could read "Lamb's Tales" without strain in such light. And, often, I saw whole walls of books. What a sight! Sometimes, I saw people at table, eating from finely fashioned plates on a snow-white cloth. And the chairs in these rooms were big and comfortable. And

the rooms had space. From some, where a window was open, came the kind of music I never heard in Vrededorp.

Sometimes, on these nightly walks, I grew tired, but the park benches I passed said: EUROPEANS ONLY.

Sometimes I had the price of a cup of tea as I walked past cheerful-looking little cafes. No visible sign was up. But I knew these, too, were: RESERVED FOR EUROPEANS ONLY.

Really, these streets and trees, almost, the clean air I breathed here were: RESERVED FOR EUROPEANS ONLY.

I was the intruder. And like the intruder, I walked carefully lest I be discovered.

I longed for what the white folk had. I envied them their superior, European lot.

The familiar mood that awaits the sensitive young who are poor and dispossessed, is a mood of sharp and painful inferiority, of violently angry tensions, of desperate and overwhelming longings. On these nightly walks, that mood took possession of me. My three books fed it.

for EUROPEANS ONLY

BECAUSE OF THAT SIGN I had been born into the filth and squalor of the slums and had spent nearly all my childhood and youth there; because of it a whole generation, many generations, had been born, had grown and died amid the filth and squalor of the slums. I had the marks of rickets on my body; but I was only one of many, not unique. I had had to go to work before I went to school. Many had never gone to school. Free compulsory education was "Reserved for Europeans only". All that was finest and best in life was "Reserved for Europeans Only". The world, today, belonged to the "Europeans."

And in my contacts with them, the Europeans had made it clear that they were the overlords, that the earth and all its wealth belonged to them. They had spoken the language of physical strength, the language of force. And I had submitted to their superior strength. But submission can be a subtle thing. A man can submit today in order to resist tomorrow.

My submission had been such. And because I had not been free to show my real feeling, to voice my true thoughts, my submission had bred bitterness and anger.

And there were nearly ten million others who had submitted with equal anger and bitterness.

One day, the whites would have to reckon with

these people. One day their sons and daughters would have to face the wrath of these embittered people.

The two million whites cannot for ever be overlords of the ten million non-whites. One day they may have to submit to the same judgement of force they have invoked in their dealings with us. . .

For me, personally, life in South Africa had come to an end. I had been lucky in some of the whites I had met. Meeting them had made a straight "all-blacks-are good-all-whites-are-bad" attitude impossible. But I had reached a point where the gestures of even my friends among the whites were suspect, so I had to go or be forever lost. I needed, not friends, not gestures, but my manhood. And the need was desperate.

Perhaps life had a meaning that transcended race and color. If it had, I could not find it in South Africa. Also, there was the need to write, to tell freedom, and for this I needed to be personally free. . .

When the first rays of the morning sun touched the sky in the east I got up and dressed. The long night was over. This was the moment of departure. I felt in my pocket. The three pounds were still there.

I walked briskly down to the docks. And all my dreams walked with me.

*Extracts from TELL FREEDOM
by Peter Abrahams*



the SUFFERING YOUTH

FROM NORTH TO SOUTH, African evolution forges ahead and achieves in a few decades results that took Europe centuries to attain, giving rise to inevitable clashes and conflicts and the most serious social and family problems. Young men and girls have a conception of family life and conjugal intimacy unknown to the elders. African youths are becoming more and more conscious of their personality and their dignity. Result? . . . the urge to throw off the degrading tyranny of certain ancestral customs—a veritable agony and profound moral suffering—in face of opposition, apathy and misunderstanding.

In North Africa, "the Moslem woman lives in an ever increasing subordination regardless of the place she holds in the family, receiving neither esteem nor consideration, subject to man solely because he is man and she, woman. Her personality is reduced to nothing by that of man . . . for him, liberty—for her, slavery; for him, knowledge—for her, ignorance."

The extracts below, taken from newspapers published in Algeria express the profound sentiments of today's evolved young Moslem girl.



"OUR WOMEN can no longer, in this twentieth century, accept the situation caused by a mode of life purely Moslem and incompatible with civilization."

"They cannot continue to bear the heavy burden of prejudices and customs that more than ten centuries of ignorance have imposed on Moslem society."

"They can no longer accept to be considered as something to be kept out of sight, a dishonor that must never be spoken of, the accursed creature about whom none should ever inquire."

"They want a complete rehabilitation worthy of them and their role."

"Our women, who have until now borne all patiently, can no longer bear the shadow and the humiliation of an inferiority that is wholly unjust."

"OUR YOUNG GIRLS who want to participate in all the aspects of life in the historical evolution of North Africa with, and for the same reason as, our young men, have decided to battle desperately against marriage without the girl's consent, ignorance and the false ideas and superstitions which are at the root of all the evil from which the Moslem suffers, an inferior mode of life, the menace of debauchery, etc.

"Our young girls have decided to preach by word

and example, to lead a life worthy of our age, and to be our pride and our honor; to second our efforts to create in the home a moral atmosphere that is more just, most healthy and more Moslem; to renew and transform the intimate life of our family and society. We must help in their crusade, in the fight for their emancipation so as to allow them, by breaking off their shackles, to take part in the life of our country". (Kassim Amin).



The evolved youth in Central Africa is not less tortured by the desire for a legitimate emancipation than the young North African.

The obstacles they meet with are often insurmountable.

The following is an example among thousands:

MARTHA, whose slim, well cut figure, tense features and melancholy look, speaks of material comfort . . . and a hidden depth of mental suffering . . . has completed her studies at a Teacher Training College in France. Her intellectual accomplishments embrace a wider horizon than the College curriculum, for she has travelled a good deal abroad and has been able to satisfy her artistic temperament with the paintings and music of the Masters.

Her Protestant father married a fine girl—a brilliant pupil of the Protestant Mission school. Fortune smiled on this home and blessed it with children.

Not long after, the husband inherited his father's chieftainship. On his business rounds he allowed his passions to get the better of him; at first secret, illegitimate ties soon became public and unrestrained: a second and third wife took abode in his house. Of course, they remained on a lower plane than the legitimate wife but the latter aroused their jealousy by her apparent superiority which they could not help feeling. An excellent housewife and mother, the latter proved her abnegation and strength of character by bringing up, as her own, her rival's children. She did not want them to be a dishonor to their father later on. . .

Martha grew up in this atmosphere; her native sensitiveness made her feel the affront to her mother and her suffering: she had had confidence in her husband who had bound himself to live as a monogamist, and now. . .

We spoke of it together, one day:

"You haven't the faintest idea, Sister, of the life our women lead at home. It is abominable . . . the husband deceives them, does not give them what is

necessary. They have to work hard to live, even the richest."

Martha recalled memories of her childhood, and the recent marriage of her cousin of whom an immense dowry was asked:

"My mother worked till midnight, for a year, to help him because all the relatives have to contribute, and yet the family is in debt because of this marriage."

"Education will remedy this."

"Education . . . that is for later! Actually, we need racial solutions to our difficulties for our country is becoming depopulated as you must have remarked yourself. The dowry has become the cause of instability in marriage and the cause of polygamy. Look at my own father . . . He is rich—he has just married a young wife. I asked him:

"What must I call her?"

"Mother . . . of course!"

"Indeed not! She is younger than I!"

I knew that her mother, weary of her unhappy existence, had obtained a divorce, but I refrained from mentioning the subject, so painful to her: for she wants, first and foremost, to help her mother, then all the women of her race. She spoke to me of an eighteen year old cousin, already a widow. They wanted to marry her to a polygamist relative of her husband. As she refused, they threatened to take away her two children.

"You do have some good families, all the same," I remarked.

"Yes, the young clergymen, for example, marry without a dowry and bring up good monogamist families; but among the women with dowries, a state of servitude exists, and one often hears such remarks

as: 'Not having been beaten is equivalent to not having a husband' or, 'If I don't beat her she will say I am not a man.' Most of the young girls lack an ideal and it is not their fault either. Their family flatters them, makes a show of them; their brothers make them unduly aware of their attractions: 'Our sister must be bought at a high price.' Or else they encourage her: 'Hurry up to earn some money and buy a bicycle like the others,' and to earn means prostitution."

Martha's legitimate pride suffers from all this. I changed the subject and questioned her about her studies and her contact with France. She often spent her holidays in several French families where she learned to appreciate the mutual affection, the husband's courtesy, the equality between husband and wife, notwithstanding the difference in their daily duties, which mark the father and mother.

I admired this young African's determination to acquire a high culture and I let her speak of her dreams for the future: of the girls in whom she

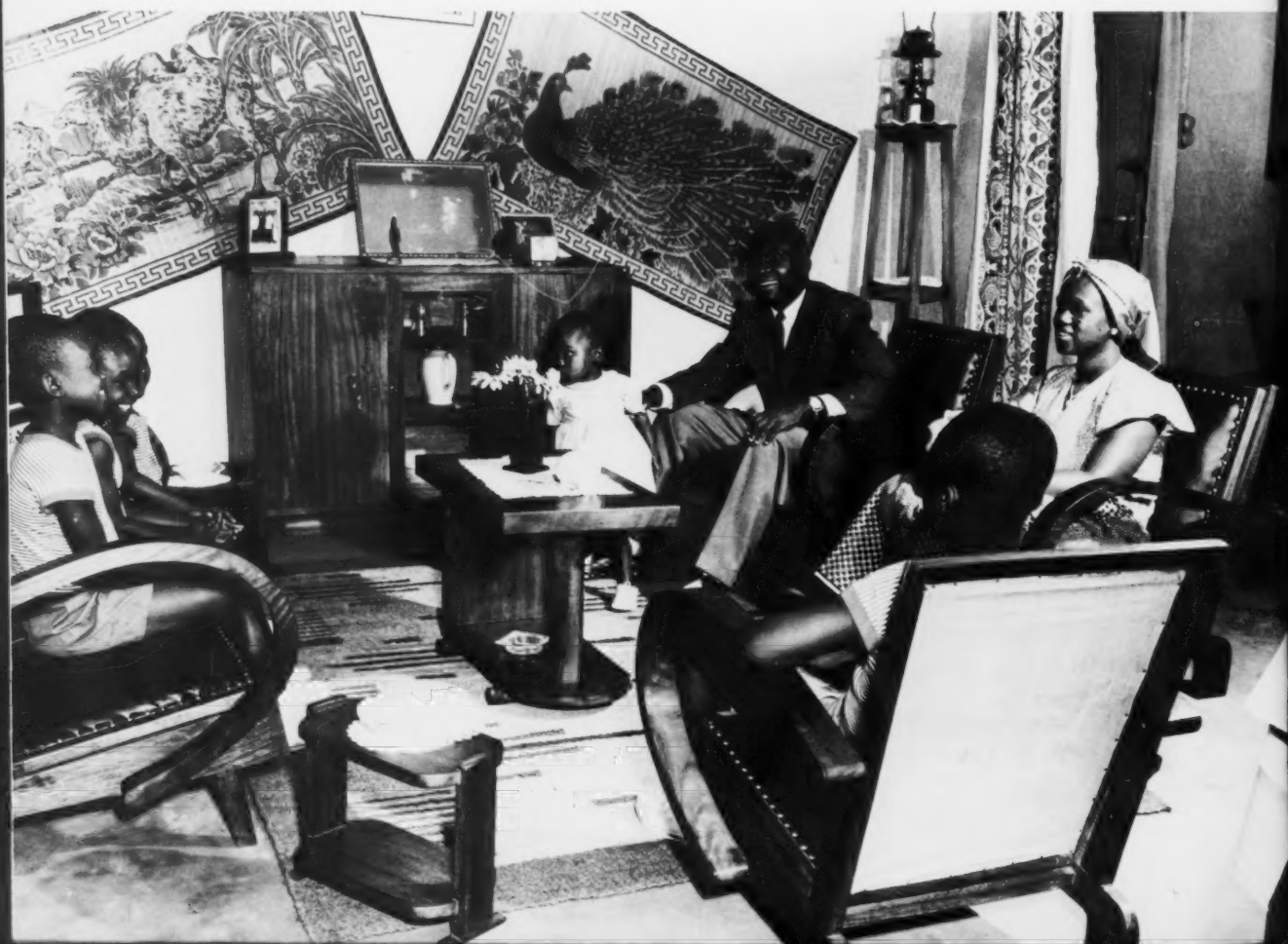
intends to form a strong character and personality, to give them a sense of their responsibility as also of their dignity.

"It is going to be difficult; many lack an ideal; they have no sense of reality; they do not see the adaptations that are necessary; they are not aware of their role in society. Nine out of ten do not think of this."

"God will help you."

"I count on Him," she answered with all simplicity. This young torch-bearer has sacrificed all desire for personal happiness in order to devote herself fully to that of others. It is regrettable that her misanthropy, though not without cause, instinctively puts her on the defensive. Martha is intelligent, understanding; she will know how to adapt herself to circumstances and collaborate loyally with her colleagues in order to undertake the family education of African youth . . . but at the cost of how many struggles and what acute suffering!

Sr. Marie Andre, W.S.



WHAT CAN BE DONE ?



ONE SINGLE ISSUE of a magazine dedicated to problems besetting Africa today, fails of necessity to cover such a vast subject . . . It can only sketch a rough outline; an inadequate picture, bound to be gloomy and to weigh heavy upon us.

However, one thing is certain . . . Africa is living the most momentous years of its destiny. Witness its economic, scientific, technical and social revolution. The entire continent is experiencing violent upheavals which are shaking the very foundations of its ancestral structure.

What has been done and what is being done to solve these problems, to alleviate and dispel such cruel sufferings?

Various European governments as well as Christian Missions have not been indifferent to the distressing problems facing them. They have organized countless hospitals, dispensaries and social services to wage war against physical sufferings. Other numerous and no less important institutions such as primary, secondary, technical and professional schools are building an Africa of tomorrow by preparing the African youth to cope with the rigorous demands of a modern world.

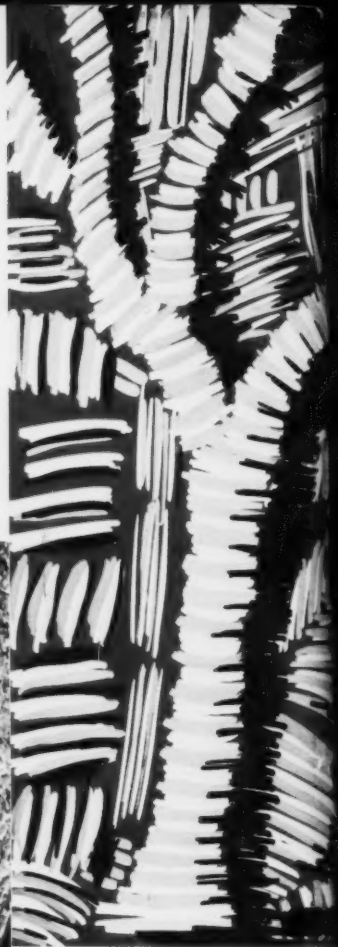
Although Christianity has caused numerous works of charity to flower in Africa and has spread abroad the benefits of western civilization, it has not succeeded in banishing suffering . . . the lot of all mankind; nor has it solved Africa's multiple and painful dilemmas. It must be remembered, after all, that Christ did not appear on earth to explain or suppress suffering. He came to teach us how to accept, bear and sanctify the garment of suffering which He Himself wore with such tremendous profit.

The truth is plain: Christianity alone has the power to transform hearts and to give suffering its eternal value; it alone, through its power to love, can save Africa. In Christianity the material evolution of Africa will find support for its moral evolution . . . creating, as it does, a happy balance between their respective values. In its transcending light the problems of society are clarified; human sufferings understood.

To implant and consolidate in Africa the Christian ideals which will save it from disaster has become the duty of both missionary and laity. The crying appeal of Pope Pius XII in his encyclical "Fidei donum" was aimed at Catholics the world over:

The repercussions of the Catholic situation in Africa go greatly
beyond the frontiers of that continent and it is necessary
that under the impulse of this Apostolic See, the fraternal response
to so many needs should come from the entire Church.

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